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Title: **Opening the Doors of Wonder: Reflections on Religious Rites of Passage**

Author: Arthur J. Magida

Publisher: University of California Press 2006. 1-294 p.

Arthur J. Magida of University of Baltimore analyzes in this book the wonderful experiences of coming-of-age ceremonies with reference to the believers of different religions in the United States. The book is an account on the evolution of rites of passage in five major religions like Jewish bar and bat mitzvah, Christian confirmations, Muslim shahadas, Hindu sacred thread ceremonies and Zen jukai ceremonies in Buddhism by explaining the theological concepts associated with these ceremonies in a practical way.

Magida interviewed well-known and influential persons coming from different spheres of life belonging to different religions to recall the experiences of their coming-of-age ceremonies to find out if these ceremonies had some impact on their lives. Before starting the oral narratives, he provides biographical notes about the persons with some highlights about the ceremonies of the corresponding faith. To gather recollections from Christian faith, he interrogated TV anchor Bob Abernethy, African novelist Chinua Achebe, explorer of different religions Huston Smith, comedian Julia Sweeney and founder of the Arab-American Institute Jim Zogby. A college president Leon Botstein, New Yorker cartoonist Roz Chast, rabbi Harold Kushner, writer Letty and her daughter Abigail Pogrebin, psychedelic pioneer Ram Dass, rabbi Jeffrey Salkin and Nobel Laureate Eli Wiesel have shared their feelings about Jewish rites of passage. Internationally renowned holistic guru Deepak and his son Gotham Chopra uncover the underlying meanings of the life passage rituals in Hinduism. Zen roshi John Daido Looi and leading expert on Tibetan Buddhism in the West Robert Thurman elucidate the Buddhist rituals. Coleman Barks, who translated Rumi, Dr. Yusuf Islam (former rock star Cat Stevens), and a writer and Jewish convert to Islam Michael Wolfe discuss their experiences of Islamic rituals.

Only few out of these eighteen participants recognized these ceremonies as walk towards their faith or skepticism afterwards. Magida argues that life initiation ceremonies do not necessarily link the human with divine or transfer knowledge. Instead they try to transfer the possibility of knowledge, and most of the experiences explored in this book are without any spiritual reveal because these ceremonies, except in Islam where there is no as such ceremony to mark the initiation, are performed at initiation into adulthood or into faith when a child has no consciousness and deliberation into the religion due to her/his very young age.

Magida says that American youth do not have such rites of passage as aboriginals perform in primal cultures. Instead their growth is marked by getting a driver's license, as men's movement leader Robert Bly thinks, or by involving in some social service project like aiding migrant workers, volunteering at food banks or building homes for the needy in Reform Judaism and Catholics. He points to certain new rituals like the Quinceanera among Hispanics and a Quaker-influenced foot-washing ceremony at Guilford College.

The personalities interviewed by Magida mostly relate themselves to more than one religion or no religion at all, therefore, their views about the rites of passage in one religion as participants is an issue that needs a lot of discussion. The book does cover a lot on cultural meanings of the rites of passage ceremonies. In this sense, it could be helpful in studying the efficaciousness of rites of passage and the evolution of faith or

skepticism in an individual's life. The book not only provides an essential understanding of the rites of passage in human life but also provides an opportunity to understand beliefs and practices of the religion of others and so contributes to inter-faith harmony in its own style.

Muhammad Aurang Zeb Mughal